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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the trends in higher education and the eventual and inevitable effects on forensics. The analysis of the problem is intended to define the issues, provide a preliminary response to recent occurrences in education, and decide what regional and national forensic associations can do. The paper concludes with a list of eight recommendations for speech educators and administrators to consider. (Author/RB)

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Abstract of
"Response to the Trends: National and Regional Associations"

The paper is divided into three sections:

I. Definition of the Issues
   A. Can forensics survive as the number and importance of value judgments increase?
   B. Can forensics be shown to be relevant to the academic mission of the Department of Speech and the objectives of the school (or college) to which the department is affiliated?
   C. Can forensics be justified in terms of FYES per FTE, goal driven or enrollment driven models, competency-based learning, and cost/benefit analysis?
   D. Can forensics make significant contributions to the continuing education of off-campus populations?
   E. Have forensic activities become too competitive?

II. A Preliminary Response to the "Trends"

III. What Regional and National Forensic Associations Can Do
   A. Suggestions are based on three assumptions:
      1. Forensics can be justified, problems can be solved, charges can be answered.
      2. Forensic activities are not blameless, change is necessary.
      3. Final answers and actions must come from individual Directors of Forensics.
   B. Recommendations:
      1. Encourage the development and collection of a clear statement of goals for Departments of Speech and appropriate colleges.
      2. Encourage the development and collection of a clear statement of goals for forensic programs.
      3. Challenge Directors of Forensics to consider the correlation of these goals.
      4. Provide an education program for Directors of Forensics on the trends in higher education.
      5. Provide a continuing research program similar to the commissioned research projects for the National Developmental Conference.
      6. Work for certification standards and ideal working conditions for Directors of Forensics.
         a. teaching load
         b. salary
         c. tenure
         d. promotion
      7. Assist in acquiring more support for forensic programs.
      8. Assist in making debate budgets go as far as possible.
         a. Investigate discount motel rates
         b. Investigate discount rent-a-car rates
         c. Encourage cost/benefit analysis
         d. Patrol excess tournament profits
         e. Discourage waiving of tournament fees for a select few

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RESPONSE TO THE TRENDS: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

AFA President Jerry Anderson in addressing the forensic community wrote in the fall of 1972, "The economic depression in education marked by greater competition for a scarcity of resources in the climate of public and institutional accountability has resulted in new standards for allocation and reallocation of resources. These circumstances demand renewed commitments to sound and accepted educational practices and new responses by individual members and the forensic community collectively."[1] It is impossible for forensics to escape the stresses upon education as well as the stresses upon the field of speech communication. "There is substantial evidence that the sword of retrenchment has already left its mark on too many forensic and debate programs, some of long standing and national reputation as educational success models."[2]

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the trends in higher education and the eventual and inevitable effects upon forensics. The analysis is threefold: 1) definition of the issues, 2) a preliminary response to the trends, and 3) recommendations for regional and national associations.

I. Definition of the Issues

Dr. John W. Schmidt, Chairman of the Department of Speech and Dramatic Arts at Central Michigan University, has outlined several trends in higher education. For purposes of discussion, I have singled out five trends in terms of the questions posed for forensics.

A. All resource allocations are value judgments. Behind the actual dollar and man hour figures are unexamined value judgments. To the extent an administrator says that something is important, or something is necessary,

then he must also be prepared to say that something else is less important or less necessary. With the increased competition from outside sources for the dollars allocated to higher education coupled with, once allocations have been made, the internal demand for dollars and man hours, the trend for a planning and accountability procedure and process will accelerate. Ultimately the unexamined value judgments will come under close scrutiny and evaluation. The first issue, then, seems to be, can forensics survive as the number and importance of value judgments increase?

B. One of the techniques employed by institutions is a planning process. The objective of any planning process is to anticipate the future and to attempt to shape that future by intelligent action. The typical planning process is based upon premises which include: (1) setting goals and developing strategies for achieving them, (2) translating strategies into detailed operational programs, and (3) assuring that programs are carried out. The procedures involved begin with the purpose of the University, the goals of the individual planning units, and the assumptions basic to the duration of the planning period and to the planning units. Schmidt argued that debate-forensic activities seem ill-equipped to survive. In many instances the programs have little to do with the mission of the academic program of a Department of Speech, much less with the objectives of the school (or college) to which the department is affiliated.

When faced with competing demands for limited resources, the debate-forensic program is a tempting target. A second issue emerges, can forensics be shown to be relevant to the mission of the academic program of the Department of Speech and the objectives of the school (or college) to which the department is affiliated?

C. The push for accountability in higher education has brought forth various techniques for measuring productivity or methods for comparing various academic programs. The Director of Forensics must be prepared to justify forensics. In short, can forensics be justified in terms of

1. FYES per FTE?
2. goal driven or enrollment driven models?

3. competency based learning?

4. cost/benefit analysis?

D. There is no question that the survival of institutions of higher education is partially dependent upon a drastic reconstruction of institutional purposes. In particular, institutions of higher education must allocate a significant proportion of its effort to the continuing education of a great variety of off-campus populations. The ramifications of these forces on the structure, objectives, and function of our current debate-forensic programs need exploration and a positive response. A fourth issue would be, can forensics make significant contributions to the continuing education of off-campus populations?

E. Finally, Dr. Schmidt expressed concern about growing criticism of the over competitive atmosphere of intercollegiate athletics also targeting competitive debate programs. Expressed as an issue, have debate-forensic activities become too competitive?

II. A Preliminary Response to the "Trends"

The primary purpose of this paper is to outline actions which can be taken by regional and national forensic associations in light of the trends in higher education. Although the major purpose of the paper is not to provide specific answers to the issues raised, nevertheless, the writer believes that some preliminary responses are in order.

A. Can forensics survive as the number and importance of value judgments increase?

First, the financial pressure upon higher education is lessening. I would not contend that debate budgets are about to double and that we are about to enter another period of "salad years." But there is some indication that this "trend" is not as serious as it might have appeared two or three years ago.

Carol Van Alstyne, the chief economist of the American Council on Education, sees a brighter financial scene ahead. The most recent data on major sources of support for higher education show:

> Tuition revenues continue to grow.
>
> State support is increasing.
>
> Corporate profits, which affect individual and corporate giving, are up.
>
> Foundation support has started to increase sharply once again, exceeding earlier peaks.
>
> Federal support is increasing at a faster rate than at any other time in the last five years.[3]

Second, in light of these lessening financial pressures, let us not panic. Instead we should take advantage of the opportunity to investigate carefully the challenges which exist and which may intensify in the future.

B. Can forensics be shown to be relevant to the academic mission of the Department of Speech and the objectives of the school (or college) to which the department is affiliated?

It strikes this writer that before we can judge how well forensics might be meeting the goals of a department or college, we must have general consensus as to what those goals might be. Goals for a specific academic unit which may include such diverse areas as broadcasting, speech pathology, theatre, interpersonal and rhetorical communication are not always clearly spelled out. SCA President Samuel Becker addressed this issue when he wrote,

> Many perceive an unbridgeable gulf between teaching and research, between the creation of artistic experiences and the act of communication, and between the processes of face-to-face communication and those of mass communication, to name a few. Not only are we beset by these polar distinctions within our field and many of our departments, we are confounded by the <u>lack</u> of distinction between what we perceive to be part of our field and what others perceive

> to be a part of English, social psychology, linguistics, history, philosophy, journalism, or political science.
>
> A major concern of the Speech Communication Association at this point must be to work toward the resolution of these problems--to help us to determine who we are, what this field and, hence, this Association are about, what our central core is or should be.[4]

Once we are able to reach agreement as to what we are about in the field of speech communication, those in and out of forensics may then be able to find as high a correlation between departmental goals and forensic program goals as for any activity typically found in most Departments of Speech. But even at the common sense level, can the goals of academic debate and forensic events be that far afield from a department which contains courses in argumentation, persuasion, small group communication and other public speaking courses?

Perhaps it is too limiting to compare the goals of forensics with those of Departments of Speech. Since academic debate more often attracts students from all majors, it may be more appropriate to justify debate in terms of a more liberal arts education. Achievement of the values of forensics may be more in line with college goals. It is probably no surprise that in commenting upon our forensic program an Iowa State assistant dean defended it as a "college program," not just a contribution of one department.

The values inherent in debate do not seem to be that far removed from a view of my own university as expressed by our President in a faculty convocation in September 1969, "One does not need to indulge in any kind of Rousseauian mysticism to sense that this is an academic community composed of something more than a mere total of various groups, each representing a bloc of power, which go to make up a university. Rather it is composed of a sharing of common concerns, an ability to focus upon common problems, a capacity for communication and discussion, a general will to move this University forward."[5]

C. Can forensics be justified in terms of FYES per FTE, goal driven or enrollment driven models, competency-based learning, and cost/benefit analysis?

Most Directors of Forensics, including this one, would be better able to answer this question if we understood exactly the meaning and implications of these terms. Once these concepts are understood, I do not believe that we need to fear being compared with other co-curricular activities in speech or in any area for that matter. Take for example competency-based education. The goals and achievements of debate-forensic activities seem highly correlated with this list of eight competencies outlined by Alverno College, Milwaukee:

> Develop effective communication skills.
>
> Sharpen analytic abilities.
>
> Develop a workable, problem-solving skill.
>
> Develop facility in making individual value-judgments and individual decisions.
>
> Develop facility for social interaction.
>
> Achieve understanding for the relationship of the individual and the envioroment.
>
> Develop awareness and understanding of the world in which the individual lives.
>
> Develop knowledge and understanding of the arts and humanities.[6]

Let us not fear to be compared.

D. Can forensics make significant contributions to the continuing education of off-campus populations?

Certainly one of the greatest challenges facing any Director of Forensics is to see that the values and resources associated with debate-forensic activities be spread as widely as possible. This should include off-campus as well as on-campus populations. Too often the assumption is that programs for off-campus persons must necessarily be developed at the expense of existing commitments. While I

would support programs for and programs including those involved in continuing education, I would prefer to see these in a context of the present program, usually competitive setting. We must be open to experimentation and innovation.

Perhaps the American Forensic Association National Council was not out of line when recently proposing that the AFA Constitution define forensics to include "debate, discussion, extemporaneous speaking, oratory, and other traditional/non-traditional and competitive/non-competitive oral communication activities, local, state, regional, national, and international/intercultural, and other related speech activities."[7] Now that the amendment has been approved, we would do well to meditate upon the implications.

E. Has forensics become too competitive?

The charge of over-competition is an old one, and more often than not merely an assertion by one who has an axe to grind, usually for some less obvious reason. Competition is an important aspect of academic forensics. When one contends that debate is now overly competitive, he obviously assumes an obligation to support his charge. In short, he assumes a burden of proof.

When asked to compare forensics with other student activites requiring academic resources, we must respond. However, when random, individual charges are issued toward forensics, we must ask for proof. We have a right to expect not only specific examples of harm, but quantification showing significance of the problem.

The administrator, be he a disgruntled Director of Forensics, a cautious Department Chairman, or a conservative Dean, should be aware that most debate programs have a method of self-control, often beyond the power of an over competitive Director of Forensics. I speak of the student. When students have had enough, they quit. It is that simple. It has wrecked many a program, but nothing can be as effective in controlling the over-competitive tendencies which may exist.

The above answers are not meant to be final. They represent the initial responses of one Director of Forensics. The trends in higher education offer a challenge to those of us in forensics, and deserve the serious attention of the best minds.

Most recently the National Endowment for the Humanities has approved a $233,900 grant for a Bicentennial Youth Debate Program. That means almost one quarter of a million dollars allocated for a competitive program for high school and university aged persons. With such recent and strong support can we be as desperate as those who challenge would like to believe? If we can convince Washington, cannot we also convince an unbiased administrator?

III. Recommendations for Regional and National Associations

This writer is not only aware of the amount of annual person-hours devoted to forensics in high schools and colleges across the country, but he is also aware of the effort which many devote to professional organizations at the state, regional, and national levels. The impact of these associations can be felt by members and non-members alike. The recommendations presented below are in response to several trends in higher education introduced by Dr. John Schmidt. The recommendations are presented with three assumptions in mind.

First, debate-forensic activities can be justified, problems can be solved, charges (even those unsupported) can be answered. Let the administrators name the criteria and forensics can be justified, favorably compared to other academic endeavors.

Second, forensic activities are not blameless. Some practices cannot and should not be defended. After careful study, changes should and must be made. But the reason for change must be clearly justified and not merely the result of panic or pressure from administrators whether they be fair, biased, or uninformed.

Finally, this paper is presented with the conviction that final answers and actions should come from Directors of Forensics. We exist in individual situations. My problems are not your problems. Professional associations must work with generalities. Only the individual Director can resolve his specific challenges.

With those three assumptions in mind, the following suggestions are offered as a stimulus for later and more specific input into the Task Force Assembly of the National Developmental Conference on Forensics.

1. Encourage the development and collection of a clear statement of goals for Departments of Speech and appropriate colleges.

2. Encourage the development and collection of a clear statement of goals for forensic programs.

3. Challenge Directors of Forensics to consider the correlation of these goals.

4. Provide an education program for Directors of Forensics on trends in higher education.

5. Provide a continuing research program similar to the commissioned research projects for the National Developmental Conference on Forensics.[8]

6. Work for certification standards and ideal working conditions for Director of Forensics.

   a. teaching load

   b. salary

   c. tenure

   d. promotion

7. Assist in acquiring more support for forensic programs.

8. Assist in making debate budgets go as far as possible.

   a. Investigate discount motel rates

   b. Investigate discount rent-a-car rates

   c. Encourage cost/benefit analysis

d. Patrol excess tournament profits

e. Discourage waiving of tournament fees for a select few

It would be ideal if professional associations could solve all of the problems, but of course they cannot. As President Becker wrote, "The major role of this Association /SCA/ is that of catalyst. The Association, as an Association, can do no research; it can do no teaching. Rather, through the provision of appropriate stimuli and opportunities and contexts for fruitful interactions among its members (at meetings and through the pages of the journals), it should stimulate. . ."[9] But most importantly, "we cannot wait until our only option is to react to the proposals of others or to capricious events; we must act while we yet have many options."[10]

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April 5, 1974

Footnotes

[1]Jerry M. Anderson, "Comment and Report From the President: New Circumstances Demand Renewed Commitments and New Responses," Journal of the American Forensic Association, IX, No. 2 (Fall 1972), p. 328.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Jack Magarrell, "Brighter Signs Seen in Funding of Universities," The Chronicle of Higher Education, February 25, 1974, p. 1.

[4]Samuel L. Becker, "Presidential Message," Spectra, X, No. 1 (February 1974), p. 1

[5]W. Robert Parks, Faculty Handbook: Information for the Academic Staff, Iowa State University, Ames, 1973, p. 3.

[6]Jack Magarrell, "New 'Competency Based' Education Plan Let Students Find Own Way to Goals," The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 18, 1974, p. 3.

[7]Constitution, American Forensic Association, Article II, July 1, 1973.

[8]Research included: (See Winter 1974 JAFA, pp. 119-174)

Kenneth E. Andersen, "A Critical Review of the Behavioral Research in Argumentation and Forensics"

Betty Anderson and Irene Matlon, "A Description of High School Forensic Programs Report on a National Survey"

Donald Douglas, "The Status of Historical Research in Argumentation"

Edward L. McGlone, "The Behavioral Effects of Forensics Participation"

W. Barnett Pearce, "Attitudes Toward Forensics"

Richard D. Rieke, "Forensics in the United States, 1973"

[9]Samuel L. Becker, op. cit., p. 2.

[10]Ibid.